Perceptions of Polyamory vs. Monogamy: Replication Study

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Introduction

We are examining college students' attitudes towards polyamory and monogamy in the context of race, political orientation, gender and religious affiliation in a new population that is more conservative, Utah Valley University (UVU), compared to a study done last year at more liberal college, Austin College (AC; Smith, Bagley, & MacFarlane, 2016). Few researchers have investigated polyamory and monogamy together and people's' attitudes towards both at the same time. Researchers have also not examined both concepts together in the context of race, gender, sexual attitudes, political orientation, and religious affiliation. Although these concepts have been studied separately no one has published a cohesive study that combine them all. We previously studied the relationships between these variables among Austin College students. The present study attempts to replicate these findings among students from another university.

Method

Participants
We recruited our participants from the Utah Valley University psychology participant pool. In total we recruited 176 participants. The majority of our sample was White (95%), female (58%) and straight (89%).

Measures
Participants completed religiosity (Huber & Huber, 2012), political orientation (Everett, 2013), likability (Reysen, 2005), sexual orientation (Asendorpf & Penke, 2008), and demographics.
Participants completed the Centrality of Religion Scale (Huber & Huber, 2012), The Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (Everett, 2013), The Reysen Likability Scale (Reysen, 2005), The Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008), The Attitudes towards Polyamory Scale (Giuliano, Herselman, Hutzler, & Johnson), and demographics. We also developed an 8-item Scenario Scale to measure participant attitudes towards a potential roommate's relationship status. Each item was scored on a 4-point Likert scale, with higher total scores reflecting more favorable attitudes toward the potential roommate.

Procedure
After providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of three possible scenarios. The scenario stated a fellow student was looking for a roommate, and the reader is in need of one due to financial reasons. The scenarios differed in only one aspect, the relationship status of the potential roommate. The roommate was either in three romantic relationships (polyamorous condition), one romantic relationship (monogamous condition), or one romantic relationship as well as three other sexual relationships (open condition). Participants were then completed the measures listed above.

Analyses
We used ANOVAs to determine whether there were significant differences between scenarios for the Scenario Score or Reyson Likability Scale score and a chi-squared test for willingness to be the person's roommate. We used multiple regression analysis to identify significant predictors of the Scenario Score and logistic regression to identify significant predictors of willingness to be the person's roommate. All analyses were conducted using SPSS.

Results

We found no significant difference between scenarios for the Scenario Scale score [$F_{(2,173)} = 0.88$, $p = .42$], but there was a difference in the Reysen Likability Scale [$F_{(2,171)} = 14.32$, $p < .001$] such that the monogamous roommate was rated as more likable than the polyamorous roommate ($p = .009$), and both were more likable than the roommate in an open relationship ($p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively; see Figure 1). Participants' willingness to be roommates followed the same pattern [$\chi^2(2, n = 174) < .001$].
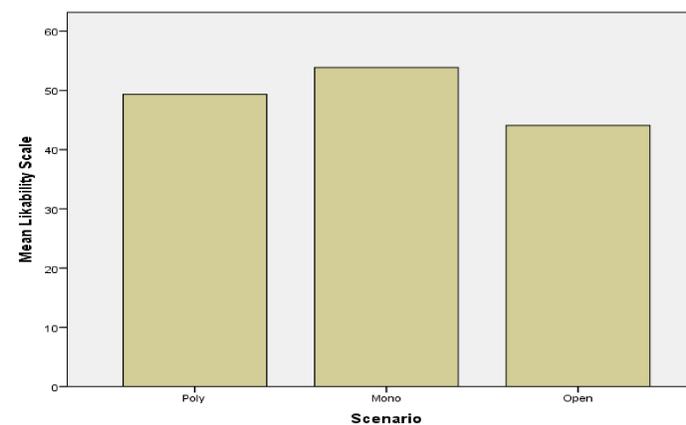

Figure 1. Mean Reyson Likability Scale score based on scenario

There were no significant predictors of Scenario Score (see Table 1). Participants were less willing to choose to be roommates in the open scenario compared with the polyamorous scenario ($p = .003$; see Table 2), while there was no difference between the polyamorous and monogamous scenarios ($p = .07$). Other significant predictors of willingness to choose to be roommates were higher likability scores ($p = .01$) and higher levels of political conservatism ($p = .04$).

Table 1
Linear Regression Predicting Scenario Total Score.

Variable	b	SE	β	t	p
Constant	15.48	5.58	--	2.78	.01
Scenario	0.72	0.50	-.13	1.52	.13
Reysen Likability Scale	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.36	.72
Behavior Facet Average (SOI-R)	-1.53	1.69	-0.09	0.91	.37
Attitude Facet Average (SOI-R)	-0.15	1.10	0.01	-0.14	.89
Desire Facet Average (SOI-R)	-0.49	0.43	-0.12	-1.14	.26
Social and Economic Conservatism Scale	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.50	.62
Attitudes of Polyamory Scale	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.18	.86
Centrality of Religiosity Scale	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.60	.55
Gender	0.17	0.83	0.02	0.21	.83
Relationship Status	0.16	0.90	0.02	0.17	.86
Sexual Orientation	1.59	1.36	0.10	1.16	25
Race	-0.95	1.07	-0.07	-0.88	.38
Academic Classification	1.24	0.86	0.23	1.44	.16
Age	0.16	0.09	0.15	1.71	.09

Table 2
Logistic Regression Predicting Willingness to be Roommates.

Variable	B	SE	Wald's z	p	OR
Constant	-6.87	3.17	4.69	.03	--
Reysen Likability Scale	0.07	0.03	7.24	.01	1.07
Behavior Facet Average (SOI-R)	-0.14	0.90	0.03	.87	1.07
Attitude Facet Average (SOI-R)	-0.39	0.63	0.37	.54	0.68
Desire Facet Average (SOI-R)	0.40	0.25	2.64	.10	1.49
Social and Economic Conservatism Scale	0.00	0.00	4.20	.04	1.00
Attitudes of Polyamory Scale	0.06	0.03	6.73	.09	1.07
Centrality of Religiosity Scale	0.00	0.03	0.03	.86	1.00
Gender	-0.70	0.45	0.02	.89	0.94
Relationship Status	-0.44	0.49	0.81	.37	0.64
Sexual Orientation	-0.63	0.82	0.59	.44	0.53
Age	-0.01	0.05	0.09	.78	0.99
Sophomore	0.57	0.58	0.96	.33	1.76
Junior	-0.77	0.62	1.56	.21	0.46
Senior	-0.26	1.07	0.06	.81	0.77
Monogamous Scenario	0.93	0.51	3.30	.07	2.53
Open Relationship Scenario	-1.47	0.50	8.57	< .001	0.23

Discussion

The responses from UVU are similar to our previous data in that both sets of participants generally found the roommates to be equally appealing in terms of Scenario Score regardless of scenario. The principle difference between samples is the AC students disliked open and polyamorous the same on the likability scale and in choosing the roommate, whereas the UVU group liked and was more willing to choose the polyamorous roommate over the open roommate. One potential issue with this study is that our sample was fairly homogenous; we had a 95% White sample, which may have skewed our results. This study adds to the limited amount of research on polyamory and monogamy and helps give a solid comparison to our previous research. This study (alone or in conjunction with our previous study) creates a foundation for future research into attitudes towards monogamy and polyamory.

References

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